1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
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girls, on the whole, getting less than the boys. Young girls may eat at their father's table, but after the age of twelve, sex dichotomy is established in food, and the female members of the family eat afterwards.

The meal usually starts with the invocation, 'In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful', and ends by every participant's saying 'Praise to God'. The father, as the disciplinarian, watches to see if any child shows signs of greed or wasting food by dropping it, whereupon he has to ask him to control himself, saying, 'Oh boy! Why don't you say in the name of God?' If the child continues to be careless or rude, he might be hit or given less share of the meat or his share might be given to one of his more disciplined brothers. Generally speaking, children are expected to be silent and obedient at meals. A child's complaint about food is not tolerated as such a complaint removes 'baraka'.

The end of more pretentious meals, especially on festival occasions, always witnesses the family's remembrance of its deceased members, when the father asks all the members present to recite the 'Fatiha' from the Koran for the souls of the dead. The eve of the two religious feasts Ramadan and Adha is called Rahamat—mercy, where practically every family prepares a good meal at the end of which they ask God to have mercy on their deceased. On the morning of the feast-days, the womenfolk make special wheat bread, which they take to eat or distribute among children or whoever is present at the cemetery, asking them to read the Fatiha for their dead.

Hospitality is shown by offering an excessive amount of food. In case of guests, the table or tray is arranged with loaves of bread all round, no gaps being left. The guess should be made to feel that there is an abundance of food and 'ghamoos', and should be encouraged all the time to eat by saying, 'Go ahead; do your best; try more of this', and so on. The etiquette of hospitality is that while the guest must show a kind of restraint, the host must be always persuading him to carry on. The host must also apologize for not being able to provide the right quantity and quality of food for the occasion, saying, 'May our affection cover up the deficiency in the meal'.

There is no doubt that the partaking of food is one of the main forces bringing about or reinforcing relationship between members of this community and between them and other neighbouring villages. 'There is *bread and salt between* us' is a strong binding moral force between two people or two families, and to betray bread and salt is almost a sin, which is punishable either in this world or in the next. The commensalism of the clan-meals in the breaking of the daily fast during the whole month of Ramadan, breakfast on the mornings of the two feasts and on funeral days is a reminder of, and contributor to, group solidarity. Boys who carry their fathers' trays of food are usually exchanged, and sent to eat at another man's tray.

At the beginning of the fresh harvest, a special meal is provided by

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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ten pounds; otherwise the 'Amareen have to pay the sum of ten pounds. The payment of money actually takes place, but it is always given back to the payer as 'Arab-coffee' and there is no appeal beyond this stage.

The Arab council is the traditional agent for maintaining law and order in the village, and its composition and functioning reflect the traditional concept of authority. Prestige derived from age, experience, and sobriety combined with power attached to landowners and heads of large families who are well known for their hospitality, are the main qualifications for selection in these councils. Although these principles are not rigidly adhered to in the village itself, they are more observed in composing a council to arbitrate in a dispute in another village. Like Chan Kom, Silwa conceives of a hierarchy of power and responsibility. As in Tepoztlan, government is ideally a fatherly discharge of responsibility by the powerful and able to give benefit to all, but with lesser men taking lesser places.[1] These Arab councils vary in their composition according to the gravity of the issue. They are formed frequently and spontaneously to settle disputes, but their proceedings are almost uniform.

Women have similar gatherings for settling feminine disputes, but they are less formal and lack that atmosphere of solemnity that prevails in men's councils. Men's councils, however, could be convoked to settle women's conflicts creating disruption between two houses, and men are expected to plead the case of the women concerned and undertake the responsibility of making them abide by the council's decision.

In the arguments that take place in these councils, one can hardly fail to notice the importance of the mediators appealing to the kinship idioms to minimize the insult or the loss, or the accusers to exaggerate the offence. 'If my cousins, or brothers do so and so, how would others treat me? . . .'

It is also worth noticing that these Arab councils are held irrespective of civil law procedures. In the case of attack on somebody, or damage to fields or animals, the Arab council has to be formed to smooth the relations between the disputants. The norms and procedures of Arab councils are accepted by common consent as the basis of law and order as distinct from legalistic ways. To appeal to a remote and impersonal power vested in the local or national government is not a socially acceptable procedure, as any dispute should first be discussed by the people involved as well as those who mediate between them. My informant, Ali, regretted the fact that people do not nowadays accept reconciliation according to Arab council verdict, as they used to do; and much recourse is made to legal courts by 'brother against brother' and even father against son.

It is also evident that these Arab councils perform a very useful psychological function. By airing disputes, and transferring the offence from one circle to another in the Arab council, aggression is dissipated and diffused.

In settling damages in Arab councils, the amount has to be fixed by the gathering, but it is shameful not to return the compensation (awad) which should be decided by saying 'God compensates me in a better way'.

[1] Robert Redfield, *A Village that chose Progress*, p. 163.

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
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883 and lived all his time never deviating from the right path,
883 and never associating with those people whose hearts have been
539 blackened.
533 When he died he showed signs of piety, and his body neither decayed,
nor was attacked by worms.

. . . . .

Shams al giyama danat gum ya mureed safir,
gum jahhiz azzad min gabl al-miaad safir,
wi gabbad al-arwah daiman al-'ibad safir,
as-shaib wiyya as-sigam ju lak ya fata mursal.
wi likul umnah ata liha nabi mursal,
ata Jibril bil burag li annabi mursal.

The sun of resurrection is approaching, a warning for departure.
Prepare yourself before the hour comes.
The seizer of souls is always apparent and about.
Grey hairs and sickness are messengers for you.
For every nation there has been a messenger,
and Gabriel delivered God's message to Muhammad.

883 On some occasions these 'Boys of the Path' go to visit their 'brothers' in
884 another village. On their approaching that village, the heralding of which
628 would be by the visitors' chanting in unison popular verses and by beating on a small drum, the latter would walk out to receive them before they enter the village. They would offer them tea and dates and spend the rest of the night reciting verses or holding a 'zikr'.

Some of the adolescents and youths in the village do not take part in either the singing or mystic activities, for they are not encouraged to do so by their parents, and they are satisfied by only gathering in the neighbourhood for chatting. On asking some of these boys why they did not join in such activities, they replied that they wanted to attend to their livelihood, and as they usually felt tired through the day's work they could spare no time or effort for such activities.

869 It must be pointed out that it is not maintained here that interest in religious matters is a psychological consequence of puberty and adolescence, or that the attitude towards sex is being learnt only at this stage. Such norms as mentioned earlier are being imbibed gradually from childhood. With regard to religious matters, children start by learning about God's power at an early stage, even in their play and riddles. On going to the Kuttab they know how to recite the major Islamic creed, 'There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his Prophet', learn the obligation of fasting through the adult practice and through their own attempts to fast half a day, a day or more according to their capacity in imitation of
867 adults. As far as sex norms are concerned, they begin to express themselves in separate play as early as the age of eight and nine years. But with the
880 dawning of adolescence, the child finds himself awakened to the cumulative

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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CHAPTER VIII

INTER-VILLAGE FIGHTS. THE LAW OF REVENGE

THE Egyptian *felláḥīn* are by no means a military people, but in their inter-village fights, which are not of infrequent occurrence, they sometimes display a quite surprising ferocity. It must be remembered that to the Egyptian peasant his own village is the centre of the universe, and people of other villages, though treated with hospitality and courtesy as visitors, are, in some cases, looked upon with as much suspicion as if they were positive aliens. As will be seen later on, hostilities between adjacent villages were no less a marked feature of Egyptian life in antiquity than at the present day.

The inhabitants of some mutually hostile villages hardly ever meet without at least attempting to pick a quarrel, and I have been myself a spectator of such conflicts on more than one occasion. In most parts of the world it is usually found that the market-place is neutral ground, and that there even the most antagonistic peoples will meet unarmed. In some parts of Egypt, however, not only is the market-place the site regularly chosen for village conflicts, but fights which take place there are by no means confined to non-market-days! Various weapons (Figs. 57 and 58) are used at these inter-village encounters. The commonest are the *nabbūt* (a very stout single-stick), a primitive type of spear, and a battleaxe. The spear consists of a long wooden shaft terminating in a slender iron point or in a plain or barbed leaf-shaped blade. The axe is a long pole surmounted by a winged iron head. Stones too are used, and are thrown with deadly effect.

The first battle of this kind that I witnessed took place in connexion with the sinking of a large boat in a canal, the muddy bottom of which held it fast. An attempt had to be made to raise the vessel, to which two strong ropes were attached by divers. Large crowds had collected on either side of the canal, and the services of some of these people were enlisted in the efforts to raise the boat, but most of them, like myself, were mere spectators.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Upper Egypt

The two ropes attached to the boat by the divers were very long, as well as strong, and one was held by either group of helpers (Fig. 59). First one rope was pulled by the men on one bank, then, after a few turns, the other was tugged from the other side of the canal. This went on regularly for some time, the whole proceeding being well organized by the officer in charge of the district. However, as it turned out, the two groups of people facing one another across the canal belonged to two antagonistic villages, and, before long, stones of considerable size began to fly from one bank to another. The officer, an old friend of mine, rushed up and begged me to take shelter while he settled the matter, but I was far too interested to beat a retreat, as I wanted to see what would happen. He, armed with a stout *kurbāg* (a very powerful leather whip), rushed in among the crowd that had actually started the fray, slashing right and left. By this display of promptitude and courage he put an end to what might have been a serious and bloody fight. Meanwhile, I dodged about trying to get a snapshot of the combat, but the excited crowds, rushing hither and thither, frustrated all my endeavours. Eventually the villagers who started the fight were no longer allowed to assist, and were made to squat in rows at a distance, in dire disgrace They appeared utterly unmoved, and when I spoke to them and

FIG. 57. WEAPONS USED IN BLOOD-FEUDS AND INTER-VILLAGE FIGHTS

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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INTER-VILLAGE FIGHTS

asked them why they had behaved so badly I was met by the friendliest grins.

On another occasion I happened to be present at a fight which took place at the annual festival held in honour of a local sheikh. One of the villages mentioned above again engaged in battle with the people in whose village the festival was taking place. The chief guard of that village, a hospitable man as well as an excellent disciplinarian, invited me to visit his house after I had seen the various shows which are an important feature of such festivities.

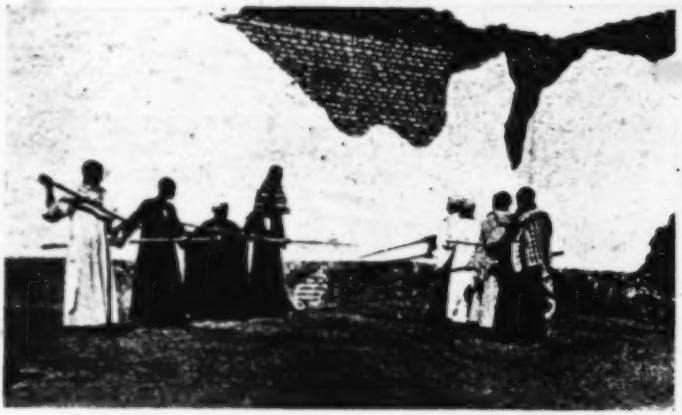

FIG. 58. ATTITUDE OF COMBATANTS IN INTER-VILLAGE FIGHTS

His house had a good balcony overlooking the whole fair, and, as the weather was very hot, I was only too glad to be able to watch what was going on from so sheltered and comfortable a position. Suddenly, without apparent warning, out came the *nabābīt* (plural of *nabbūt*), and the fun began. The head guard, however, is skilful in using the *kurbāg*, and he was soon in the thick of it, slashing right and left, accompanied by a soldier, similarly armed, who had been sent as my bodyguard. Presently the combatants fled helter-skelter down side-passages—anywhere, in fact, to get out of reach of the well-directed lashes of the whips! Peace again reigned, but not for long. A crowd composed of members of the two antagonistic villages again collected, and sticks once more had free play. This fight was stopped in the same manner as the previous one, but there were two or three repetitions before a final armistice was enforced.

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and every female child a brother (*akhkh*);[1] and since the sister loves her brother, this Jinn sister tries to destroy her real brother so that she may enjoy his love. And that is why whenever a mother curses her son she says to him *Ḥabbatak ukhtak* (*may your sister love you*).[2] The only object in cauterizing the child, or scarifying his head with a razor, is to punish him so that his sister may have pity on him and betake herself to her lover among the Jinn that he may leave him to them. Another group assert that " the Mother of Screeching " [*Umm Ḳuwaiḳ*] (i.e. the owl) was in former times a human being, and had a child with whom she was once enraged, so that she beat him so violently and painfully that he died. Then Allah punished her for that, for He changed her from human to animal form, and she has ever since so remained, enraged against the human race from which she was driven out [p. 50], and whose ruin she is constantly endeavouring to bring about, in that at sunset she passes above children, spreading her wings over them and smiting them with this disease. Some people say that one day a certain holy man struck the owl on the head with his hand to make it cease injuring people, but it would not be corrected, and that the black lines on her head are the marks of the fingers of that good man after the blow.

This practice resembles what the people of the Times of Ignorance[3] used to believe long ago in regard to the *Hāma* (a kind of owl), that when the blood of any slain person remained unavenged, there went out from his brow a *Hāma* which kept on screaming out : " Give me to drink of the slayer's blood." As the poet says :

" Oh, 'Amr neglect not my protecting and my wrong, else will I beat thee till the owl cry, ' Give me to drink.' "

[1] [Miss Blackman, *op. cit.* pp. 74–75, is seemingly wrong when she states that there is no brother (*akhkh*). Tr.]

[2] [This is another instance of the extensive belief in the *Ḳarīna* (see above p. 44). Dr. Klunzinger (formerly physician at Kosseir on the Red Sea coast) in his work, *Upper Egypt, its People and its Products* (London, 1878), deals with popular medicine on pp. 397–400. On. p. 383 he writes, " Even in the official registers of deaths kept by the physicians the *ḳarīna* was till lately a regular variety of disease, exactly corresponding to our convulsions." Tr.]

[3] [The *Jāhiliya*, or Pre-Islamic days. cf. *Acts of the Apostles*, xvii, 30. Tr.]